



May 10, 2012

Hearing on New York City's Cultural Sector and Derivative Businesses Jointly with Small Business and Cultural Affairs.

Comments prepared by
THE POINT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

THE POINT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION is a nonprofit organization dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. We believe the area's residents, their talents and aspirations, are The Point's greatest assets. Our mission is to encourage the arts, local enterprise, responsible ecology, and self-investment in the Hunts Point community. As a member of The Naturally Occurring Cultural District Working Group (NOCD-NY), a citywide alliance of community based arts networks and leaders that has joined together to revitalize NYC from the neighborhood up, we represent an anchor neighborhood based, community led cultural incubator, youth development service provider and mission driven property owner. We feel strongly that NOCD's if invested in, can be vital tool to leverage a community's assets and offer innovative solutions to some of our toughest social and economic challenges while truly helping to improve the quality of life of the current residents.

Our community of Hunts Point has had many long term struggles and still remains within one of the poorest congressional districts in the nation. Not only does our community have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, but we have some of the lowest high school graduation rates in the city and suffer from a wide range of health disparities with one of the highest asthma rates in the nation. Despite these overwhelming challenges, our community has found a way to thrive and grow, in large part due to the power that arts and culture yield in revitalizing neighborhoods like ours.

When THE POINT first opened its doors in 1994, we understood the central place that arts and culture had within our community. Home to iconic venues such as the Hunts Point Palace, the memories of a vibrant local cultural economy that encouraged local entrepreneurship and investment fueled the desire to revisit the arts as a vital ingredient in revitalizing Hunts Point. You could say that back in the 1950's Hunts Point and Southern Boulevard was in fact a Naturally Occurring Cultural District. THE POINT has worked to build off of Hunts Point's strong history. Since our founding, we have provided affordable space for numerous small creative sector enterprises, consistently employed local residents, generated local, city and international tourism, trained hundreds of young people in creative economy related jobs and improved the overall aesthetics of Hunts Point through public arts projects that speak to the cultures represented by community residents. We have seen nothing but positive returns on this investment, as now we have seen the development of two new performance arts space in community board #2, including one that was incubated at The Point, as well as a new Arts-

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centered Charter School.

In our role as a community development agency, we strive to represent the voices of our communities and communicate needs and solutions that will improve the overall quality of life of our neighbors. We are here today to once again make the case for equity and justice as it pertains to historically marginalized communities and the critical role arts and culture plays in our work to address many of the social inequities I outlined earlier. We urge the Council to use **Public Resources to Equitably Support Neighborhood Based Culture through the following policy suggestions:**

- Champion and promote neighborhood cultural vitality citywide using existing promotional tools, ranging from free street banner program to improved NYC & Co relations (i.e. reduction of fees for small culturals, borough specific campaigns, web promotion, visitor centers).
- Work with MTA to include more local cultural resources and creative districts on the neighborhood maps in the subway stations and promotional campaigns (i.e. MoMA station).
- Launch a “Made in NYC” marketing campaign to promote the City’s creative manufacturing sector, including all aspects of development and production (designer and fabricator) and art & culture that originates in NYC and moves across the globe (theater, music, publishing, art).
- Increase cultural funding to 1% of the city budget.
- Facilitate cross agency funding partnerships, like between SBS & DCA.
- Protect Summer Youth Employment funding.

We are evidence that Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts (NOCDs) stimulate a combination of social, civic, and economic benefits within communities and across them. As anchors for neighborhood-based economies, they support community self-determination & expression, equity, and local livelihoods. We look forward to continuing to be a part of this vital work moving forward.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration.

Respectfully,

Kellie Terry- Sepulveda
Executive Director